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Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Sixty-first session

Summary record of the twenty-seventh meeting
Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 9 June 2017, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Bras Gomes

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05.

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

Fifth periodic report of Sri Lanka (*continued*) (E/C.12/LKA/5; E/C.12/LKA/Q/5 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sri Lanka took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Aryasingha** (Sri Lanka) said that the implications of accession would have to be studied before Sri Lanka could make a firm commitment to accede to the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. Such a commitment would also have to be preceded by further progress towards the ratification of the country's new Constitution.

3. **Ms. Jayasuriya** (Sri Lanka) said that although the Sri Lanka had not ratified the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, it had in recent years taken on a number of related obligations under international human rights instruments, and the principles of international law contained in that Convention served as a guide for the decisions the Government made with regard to refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, under a memorandum of understanding between Sri Lanka and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Sri Lanka had undertaken to cooperate fully with the Office's work in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka was host to a relatively small number of asylum seekers and refugees: just over 600 persons were currently seeking asylum in the country, while 784 had been granted refugee status. The Government provided them with access to public health and education services.

4. The basic legal guarantees of the rights of Sri Lankan migrants were enumerated in the Constitution, while the primary piece of legislation applicable to Sri Lankan workers employed overseas was the Sri Lanka Bureau of Foreign Employment Act, No. 21 of 1985 (as amended by Acts No. 4 of 1994 and No. 56 of 2009). One of the Bureau's objectives, as set out in the Act, was to regulate the activities of employment agencies that recruited migrant workers.

5. A network of labour attachés developed as part of the Colombo Process had recently held its first meeting, at which the attachés had discussed issues of relevance to overseas workers in various countries of destination. Such non-legislative developments were complementary to legislative developments, which had included an amendment to the Penal Code that had strengthened the provisions relating to human trafficking. The measures taken by the Government to address migration issues also fell within the framework of the Immigrants and Emigrants (Amendment) Act, No. 31 of 2006. Progress had been made towards ensuring that prospective overseas workers were given a pre-departure orientation.

6. Sri Lankan nationals, especially those from rural areas, generally migrated either to be able to afford better housing in Sri Lanka or to ensure that their children could get an education that would give them a better future. As a result, the Government had put in place a programme to provide housing loans and scholarships. The Ministry of Foreign Employment's development officers reached out to prospective migrant families throughout the country, which had led to the creation of files on nearly 250,000 prospective migrant families. The files would enable the Government to identify the families' needs, determine whether any children left behind would be properly cared for and refer the families to the relevant service providers.

7. **Ms. Sumanasekara** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government had given high priority to protecting children from abuse and neglect and had undertaken a number of initiatives to improve the situation, including the development of the national action plan on child protection. The aim of the National Child Protection Policy 2017-2027 was to harmonize the activities of all relevant stakeholders. It contained the guiding principles that were to inform all child protection efforts, and its implementation would involve cooperation with civil society. It was hoped that the Policy would win cabinet approval within three months.

8. Reports of child abuse were received by the National Child Protection Authority and other agencies, which forwarded them to a special police bureau operating in the offices of the Authority. The number of complaints of abuse had increased considerably from 2013 to 2015. Child protection officers, who referred cases of abuse and sexual exploitation to law enforcement authorities, were present at both district and divisional levels. The officers also participated in awareness-raising activities. Some 3,000 children's clubs, which were set up at village level by the Department of Probation and Childcare, also identified cases of violence and other forms of abuse and reported them to the relevant authorities. For its part, the Ministry of Justice had taken a number of steps to ensure that cases of child abuse were investigated.

9. The National Child Protection Authority had conducted awareness-raising programmes for hoteliers in south Sri Lanka to combat sex tourism involving children and taken steps to monitor and prevent the sexual exploitation of children online. A judge had been appointed to address the growing threat of bullying and sexual harassment via social media. Safe houses providing care services for women and child survivors of domestic violence had been set up in Ampara, Batticaloa and Jaffna, districts formerly affected by the war. Two helplines were in operation, and the number of complaints received by the Authority, currently more than 10,000 a year, had been increasing.

10. In December 2015, the Ministry of Justice had submitted a cabinet memorandum with a view to permitting the medical termination of pregnancy in specific circumstances, including pregnancy as a result of rape or incest, pregnancy in girls under the age of 16 and in cases of serious fetal impairment. The Ministry had been advised to seek the views of the country's religious authorities and include them in a revised memorandum. A decision had been made to expedite the drafting of a bill to amend the discriminatory provisions of the Land Development Ordinance. The bill would have to be endorsed by the Provincial Councils, however.

11. **Ms. Mafusa** (Sri Lanka) said that until 2000 mental health care had been limited to tertiary health-care facilities. Since then, however, mental health services had been integrated into the country's established primary care network. The devastating tsunami of December 2004, which had increased the prevalence of mental health problems, had led to greater efforts to ensure the provision of such services. A mental health policy had been adopted in 2005, and as a result 22 of the country's 25 districts had acute inpatient facilities. There were also 16 intermediate-care units, six of which were located in the country's Northern and Eastern provinces, and approximately 250 mental health outreach clinics, which enabled persons with mental disabilities to seek treatment in or near their communities. Finding trained mental health personnel was a major challenge, but measures had been taken to address it. Additional information in that regard would be submitted in writing.

12. One of the key features of the Government's efforts to provide mental health services had been its employment of more than 4,000 community volunteers to whom it had provided the basic training needed to care for persons with mental disabilities in the home. Health facilities in areas of the country formerly affected by conflict, including facilities for psychiatric care, had been rebuilt. Support had been provided for the treatment of persons with post-traumatic stress disorder, and health outreach services had been provided to former combatants in all 30 districts of the country's Northern and Eastern provinces. Despite those efforts, however, the provision of mental health services in Sri Lanka had not yet attained the expected standard. The Government recognized that more action was needed. The Ministry of Health was currently developing a new mental health policy.

13. Sri Lanka continued to provide free universal health care to all. The Government was committed to strengthening the public health system and was aiming to increase the health budget to more than 4 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 2020. Although the number of private health-care facilities had increased considerably since 1990, even attracting medical tourists, more than 90 per cent of the population still used public facilities.

14. **Ms. Indraratne** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government allocated approximately 10 per cent of GDP to the provision of economic and social services. In 2016, government

health expenditures had been 4.5 per cent higher than in 2015, while education expenditures had increased by nearly 6 per cent over the same period. Estimates for 2017 indicated an increase of 7.5 per cent in the health budget and 11.8 per cent in the education budget. Expenditures for social protection programmes had been maintained at around 2.7 percent of GDP. The assertion that budgetary allocations to health and education had been cut was therefore incorrect.

15. **Ms. Manatunga** (Sri Lanka) said that marital rape was currently classified as a crime only in the case of non-consensual sexual relations in the context of a judicial separation. The Government recognized the need to rectify that shortcoming and had set up a committee that was reviewing offences under the Penal Code, including marital rape. One of its recommendations had been that psychosocial research should be conducted to determine the prevalence of marital rape. The committee had also recommended consultations with stakeholders, including victims, and the setting up of support services for victims.

16. Pursuant to the Official Languages Policy public servants in all branches had been denied promotions because of lack of proficiency in the official languages; the relevant figures would be provided to the Committee in due course. Provisions introduced in 2015 required that officers prove a level of proficiency in the second official language equivalent to that of their first language at entry into the service. The level required differed according to the post, but oral proficiency was mandatory at all levels. However, recruiting native Tamil speakers was proving to be a particular challenge. The long years of conflict had disrupted the education system in the Northern and Eastern provinces of the country, meaning that many people were unable to meet the requirements for police and government service employment. Between 2009 and 2015, fewer than 1,200 Tamil-speaking officers of both sexes had been recruited, and a recruitment drive in 2015 had attracted only 26 female police officers. Alternative procedures were being considered to improve the situation.

17. **Ms. Mafusa** (Sri Lanka) said that, while Sri Lanka had achieved favourable results in promoting breastfeeding and combating overweight, it lagged far behind other countries in reducing the prevalence of wasting and malnutrition in children. Supplements had been introduced for acutely malnourished children, and maternal care packages included improved screening for risk factors, micronutrient supplementation and nutrition counselling. Pregnant women, irrespective of income, were supplied with nutritious food packs. A review of the Multi-sector Action Plan for Nutrition 2013-2016 had highlighted gaps in its implementation and the new plan being drawn up included targets such as reducing the prevalence of wasting in children under the age of 5 years to 5.8 per cent and of stunting to 8.1 per cent by the end of 2020.

18. **Mr. Sadi**, noting that large numbers of Sri Lankan nationals sought employment in other countries and that some workers in the State party were forced to live on approximately US$ 2 per day, said that he would be interested to hear whether the system used to set the minimum wage conformed to the provisions of articles 7 and 11 of the Covenant, which called for decent pay and an adequate standard of living.

19. **Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão** (Country Task Force) said that he would like details of the conditions provided for by law for workers in the agricultural sector. He would also like to hear about the benefits produced by the Samurdhi poverty alleviation programme. Reports indicated that recent reforms would lead to a 10 per cent annual reduction in funding for the programme, which could then cause serious debt problems for both the programme and its beneficiaries.

20. **Mr. De Schutter** said that the goal of achieving zero hunger might be compromised by proposals in the 2017 budget that would promote large-scale export-based agricultural plantations. He wondered how those two very different needs would be reconciled. He would also like to know how the Government intended to protect small-scale farmers in the context of increased pressure on land since the creation the previous year of land banks that made land available to foreign investors.

21. **Mr. Uprimny**, welcoming the State party's recent achievements in respect of economic growth and poverty reduction, noted that its spending on health and social services represented less than 1.5 per cent of GDP. World Bank figures showed that tax

revenue in the country currently represented less than 11 per cent of GDP and was produced primarily by indirect taxation, which mainly affected the poor. He understood that the Government was undertaking a tax reform and would like to know how it intended to ensure that the tax system was progressive and would produce sufficient resources to fund social spending. The Northern and Eastern provinces, in particular, had high levels of poverty, but were also home to many victims of the conflict who would be awarded reparations. In that connection, he would be interested in hearing the delegation's thoughts on the relationship between transitional justice and economic, social and cultural rights.

22. **Mr. Windfuhr** said that he would like to know how the Government intended to address the increasing informalization of the formal sector by recruitment agencies. In the plantation sector, for example, while there were collective agreements governing daily wages, workers could never be sure of the number of days they would be working and thus of their actual pay. There were also many problems in the area of trade union rights, particularly since the labour inspectorate was very short staffed. It was reported that many enterprises in the formal sector, including State-owned companies, did not make the requisite payments into the social security system, which jeopardized the financing of the system. There was also a growing problem of personal indebtedness, especially in female-headed households. In view of the Committee's previous recommendation that social security coverage should be expanded, did the State party have any plans for a social security action plan? With regard to the informal sector, which accounted for around 70 per cent of the labour force, consideration should be given to ways of ensuring a minimum wage and the right to organize.

23. **Ms. Liebenberg** (Country Task Force) said that she would like more information on the legal provisions enabling transgender persons to have their identity documents changed to reflect their gender identity. A government circular specified that a psychiatrist had to certify that either hormonal or surgical interventions had taken place, but that might not coincide with the wishes of the individuals concerned. She would also like details of the urban housing policy. Given the problems that had occurred when families and individuals were relocated from informal settlements to high-rise developments, which often disrupted the livelihoods of the persons affected, the State party might usefully consider upgrading existing dwellings instead.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

24. **Mr. Gunatilleke** (Sri Lanka) said that, of the four transitional justice mechanisms set up pursuant to the resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council at its thirtieth and thirty-fourth sessions (A/HRC/RES/30/1 and A/HRC/RES/34/1), the truth-seeking mechanism and the Office of Reparations dealt with economic and social rights. A task force comprising representatives of civil society and academia had received suggestions from the public on the legislation to govern those two bodies, and its recommendations, currently being considered by the Government, included the need for socioeconomic rights to be included in the mandates of both the mechanism and the Office.

25. Nearly 900,000 internally displaced persons had been resettled in the Northern and Eastern provinces but over 42,000 were still awaiting durable solutions. The release and return of land occupied by the military and the settlement of land claims and disputes were being treated as matters of urgency. More than 24,000 acres of private land had been released thus far. That left 6,400 acres, of which approximately 500 acres would be released in 2017.

26. **Mr. Wimalaweera** (Sri Lanka) said that the Samurdhi poverty alleviation programme aimed to promote social justice through family- and community-based economic activities. More than 450,000 families, or 1.4 million persons, benefited from cash transfers under the programme. There were over 1,000 Samurdhi banks in the country that offered microcredit to low-income families; most of the beneficiaries were women. Other government programmes provided credit for business start-ups.

27. The National Minimum Wage of Workers Act and the Budgetary Relief Allowance of Workers Act, both adopted in 2016, were intended to improve the remuneration of workers in the private sector. Real wages in the agricultural and informal sectors had risen by 3.5 per cent and 8.2 per cent, respectively, between 2014 and 2015, and the Government

was taking steps to further increase the minimum wage. However, while wage levels were important, the Committee should also take into consideration that the State provided a number of subsidies and other types of assistance, including price controls, to benefit low-income workers. They thus had greater purchasing power than people with similar wage levels in other developing countries. To help workers in the informal sector, the Government had implemented a number of microcredit programmes.

28. In 2013, in response to the Social Protection Floor Initiative and in line with the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102) of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a study had been undertaken with ILO support to help determine future policy with regard to social security. Currently, around 75 to 80 per cent of possible beneficiaries were covered. The Government acknowledged that there was room for improvement, however.

29. **Ms. Indraratne** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government was pursuing fiscal policy reforms with a view to mobilizing more revenue, while at the same time reforming State-owned enterprises with the aim of reducing the budget deficit. To increase revenue, the Government was revising tax rates and redrafting the tax law to simplify procedures and broaden the tax base. It was also using information technology to improve tax administration services, and it had established a joint public-private committee to oversee budget management and execution. Government revenue had risen between 2015 and 2016 from 13.3 per cent of GDP to 14.2 per cent, and the budget deficit had fallen from 7.6 per cent of GDP to 5.4 per cent. The Government had granted concessions, including investment allowances, to large-scale industries to help them expand. It also had financing programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises.

30. **Mr. Pulle** (Sri Lanka) said that three of the judges on the Supreme Court and the Court of Appeal were conversant in the Tamil language and that one was of Tamil ethnicity. The legal regime governing evictions was set out by the Land Acquisition Act, which stipulated that government agencies must follow certain legal and administrative procedures when acquiring land for public purposes, with the aim of ensuring transparency and protecting the rights of landowners. When lands were required for a public purpose, the authority in question must first send a proposal to the Ministry of Lands and Parliamentary Reforms, which had to confirm the accuracy of the proposal, after which the acquisition procedure commenced and compensation was paid to the landowners. Additional details on the procedure could be provided if the Committee so wished.

31. A recent survey had revealed large numbers of low-income families living in abject conditions, including many in slums and shanties. In response, the Government had drawn up an urban regeneration programme aimed at providing basic facilities for all, relocating families to the nearest housing complex and providing education for their children and development opportunities to support their livelihoods. In the past two years, housing construction contracts had been awarded for 19 sites. Nearly 5,000 housing units had been handed over to families by the end of 2014, and 14,000 additional units were currently under construction.

32. **Mr. Wimalaweera** (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka had some 600 labour inspectors and was in the process of filling another 100 vacancies. The inspectors worked throughout the country, from 11 provincial labour bureaus and 57 local offices. Each inspector was responsible for 20 inspections per month; the annual number of labour inspections was thus generally between 70,000 and 80,000.

33. **Ms. Crăciunean-Tatu** (Country Task Force), noting that the Government planned to increase the allocation to education from 3.7 per cent of GDP to 6 per cent by 2020, asked what problems and shortcomings the increase was intended to address and how the education budget was divided between infrastructure support and investment in teaching capacity. She was curious about a new budget line item entitled "capital carrying costs", which appeared to account for a significant portion of the education budget. She wondered what the funds allocated to that item were used for. The Committee had been informed that State education was gradually being commercialized and privatized, which was leading to uneven access to education for children from lower-income families. It had also heard that several groups, including children with disabilities, had limited or restricted access to State

education. In 2012, over one third of children with disabilities between the ages of 5 and 19 had reportedly received no education at all. Had the Government taken any measures to address that situation?

34. The Committee had received reports that children of refugees and asylum seekers were denied free access to education, including primary education. In the delegation's view, was that situation a result of a lack of national legislation or had it arisen because the State was not a party to the relevant international treaties? According to some reports, certain students were denied access to some schools by reason of their caste identity. Had the Government adopted any measures to address that issue? The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women had noted persistent gender stereotyping in the education system, with a lack of girls and women in certain fields. It would be useful to receive disaggregated data on gender distributions in the education system.

35. Because of a lack of qualified teachers, less than 1 per cent of schools were reportedly implementing trilingual proficiency provisions. Did the Government have a plan to train teachers to fill the gap? Civil society organizations had expressed concern about dramatic rises in hate speech and violent attacks against religious minorities and overt campaigns against them. What efforts was the Government making through the State education system to foster understanding among all ethnic groups and appreciation of the value of cultural diversity?

36. The Committee would like to know the official number of Veddahs in Sri Lanka. It would also like to learn whether access to certain rights was based on legal recognition as a minority. The Committee had received reports that restrictions on access to land were limiting the ability of indigenous Veddahs to protect their cultural identity. Evidently, existing legislation did not contain sufficient safeguards for the Veddah community. What measures were being taken to protect access to traditional lands for the Veddahs? Were members of the Veddah community consulted when measures were taken that would affect them? The Special Rapporteur on minority issues had in 2016 pointed to the need to protect and revitalize endangered languages of indigenous Veddah people and other groups. Were any efforts under way to do so?

37. **Mr. Pulle** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government maintained a zero-tolerance policy towards all violations of the law and did not condone any acts of intolerance towards minority groups. In addition to the provisions of the Penal Code, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights Act of 2007 prohibited advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred and incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence. Religious dialogue continued to take place to ensure interfaith harmony and understanding among the various groups. To promote reconciliation among the different communities, the Government had established the Ministry of National Coexistence, Dialogue and Official Languages and the Office for National Unity and Reconciliation, which had launched several policies and inter-community dialogues. All police officers were required to take immediate action whenever hate speech was reported or occurred. Failure to do so made them liable to sanctions under the police disciplinary code.

38. Language rights were protected in the court system and by the Constitution. The Official Languages Commission was empowered to recommend principles or policies related to the use of official languages and to monitor and supervise compliance with the constitutional provisions relating to language rights. The Commission was also able to conduct investigations on its own initiative and in response to complaints it received, and to initiate remedial action.

39. **Ms. Dahanayake** (Sri Lanka) said that education was recognized as a fundamental right in the Constitution and that it was State-funded and free of charge at all levels, including the university level. The adult literacy rate was over 92 per cent. Responsibility for the education system was shared between the central Government and the provincial councils. The Government had established a dense network of public schools with sufficient staff, thus ensuring a favourable student-to-teacher ratio. The languages of instruction could be either Sinhala and Tamil or Sinhala and English.

40. Ten per cent of the education budget was earmarked for subsidies for nutrition programmes, the provision of textbooks, uniforms, and scholarships. Children from

vulnerable groups had been integrated into the education system through schools providing special education and catering for children with special needs. In addition to increasing the education budget, the Government had recently taken several further steps to strengthen the education system, including the establishment of school supervisory boards, improvement of sanitary facilities at all schools, the placement of a limit on the number of students per class and the adoption of a new Education Act.

41. **Ms. Jayasuriya** (Sri Lanka) said that, while Sri Lanka was not a party to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, the Government was mindful that certain principles of international law were generally recognized by the international community, and in that light it provided education to children of refugees and asylum seekers, which was also in keeping with its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. To the best of her knowledge, there were no caste-based restrictions on access to educational institutions.

42. Measures had been taken generally at the national level to mainstream gender in all sectors, and in the education sector specific measures had also been taken. The National Action Plan to Address Sexual and Gender-based Violence in Sri Lanka included several activities that were to be implemented under the purview of the Ministry of Education to incorporate gender considerations into school curricula and in textbooks from the primary through the tertiary levels. The existing curricula offered schoolchildren an understanding of the culture and religious values of the different communities and underscored the importance of ethnic and religious peace and harmony. The Ministry of Education had begun peace and reconciliation training campaigns for schoolteachers. The Tamil language was taught from a very young age. While such steps might seem modest, she believed the country was on the right path.

43. **Ms. Somaratne** (Sri Lanka) said that the majority of the Veddahs lived in two areas, Dambana and Maduru Oya. The Government had not adopted any specific legislation to protect the Veddah community, but their rights were safeguarded under the Constitution and other laws, and the authorities consistently engaged with members of the community on any matters affecting their social, cultural, developmental or economic status, including those related to their livelihood and land. Divisional coordinating committees met monthly with representatives of the community. The Government had established the Wanietto Trust, a fund to protect Veddah culture, and taken steps to safeguard the livelihoods of the Veddahs and provide members of the community with livelihood choices. It had also funded research on the community's lifestyle, medicines, literature and customs. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs had launched and funded a programme to preserve the traditional lifestyle, culture and beliefs of the community.

44. The Government recognized the community's right to reside in its traditional lands, especially in the Maduru Oya reserve. However, members of the Veddah population had over the years moved from traditional settlements to new areas where they had been provided with plots ranging from 0.5 to 2.5 acres. For those who had moved, assistance had been provided, thus permitting them to build 125 housing units. Education facilities were provided to the Veddah community without any discrimination, and the authorities had also carried out informal education projects in order to provide Veddah children with necessary life skills.

45. **Ms. Manatunga** (Sri Lanka) said that awareness of the rights of persons with disabilities had improved in Sri Lanka. The country had in 2016 ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and had since begun enacting legislation to implement that instrument. Legislation on sign language was currently being drafted, and a new set of rules was also being prepared relating to the rights of persons with visual impairments. Sri Lanka had also recently ratified the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled. The Government currently provided various types of assistance to persons with disabilities, including livelihood support, aid for assistive devices and housing assistance.

46. The Government recognized that children with disabilities had lower education levels and school attendance rates than other children and was aware of the need to put measures in place to address that problem. The percentage of persons with functional

disabilities who had completed the various levels of education ranged from about 35 per cent for primary education to just 1.3 per cent at the university level. There were currently some 25 special schools catering for children who were visually impaired or deaf, and there were also specific institutions for persons with autism and other disabilities. Children with disabilities received an educational allowance of up to 10,000 rupees. In 2016, 281 children had benefited from such assistance. University admissions rules had recently been changed to facilitate access to undergraduate programmes for students with disabilities, 356 of whom had entered university since 2012.

47. **Mr. Sadi** asked whether children from the Muslim community attended Muslim schools.

48. **The Chair** noted that in some cases discrimination based on caste was indirect. Procedures that were apparently neutral could be implemented in a discriminatory manner.

49. **Ms. Mafusa** (Sri Lanka) said that the public education system was accessible to all children, regardless of faith, with no restrictions. The Muslim community did maintain religious schools, madrasas, which must comply with the national education curricula.

50. **Mr. Kedzia** (Country Rapporteur) said that he wished the Government of Sri Lanka every success in its current efforts to incorporate economic, social and cultural rights into its Constitution as part of the ongoing reform process. While the Committee had placed particular emphasis on the legal dimension of compliance with treaty obligations, it acknowledged and supported the practical measures taken by the State party to give effect to the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

51. **Mr. Aryasingha** (Sri Lanka) said that the Government acknowledged the difficulties it faced and highly valued the input of the Committee. It was mindful of the importance of maintaining the momentum that had been gained in ensuring better implementation of human rights. He welcomed the constructive involvement of civil society and the national Human Rights Commission in that process. His delegation appreciated the constructive spirit that had prevailed during the dialogue and looked forward to receiving the Committee's concluding observations.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.